

VZCZCXRO2395
OO RUEHROV
DE RUEHKH #0432 0840453
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
O 240453Z MAR 08
FM AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 0294
INFO RUCNIAD/IGAD COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS KHARTOUM 000432

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF A/S FRAZER, SE WILLIAMSON AND AF/SPG
NSC FOR HUDSON AND PITTMAN
ADDIS ABABA FOR USAU

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

E.O. 12958:N/A

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [KDEM](#) [SU](#)

SUBJECT: GOSS MINISTER PRESSES FOR U.S. COMMITMENT ON ABYEI DISPUTE

¶1. (SBU) GOSS Presidential Affairs Minister Luka Biong Deng recently told ConGen Juba PolOff that President Kiir was struck by the frank nature of Kiir's meeting with with Special Envoy Richard ¶S. Williamson. Deng noted that Kiir was "relieved by the clarity of the message." Deng himself was less confident, however, noting that "obviously, this could lead us to take a stronger, more forceful position with the National Congress Party, but we need to be sure of the consistency of U.S. support - and the strength of the American backing." He claimed to know "from our sources in Washington" that the United States is exploring "alternate options to Abyei than via implementation of the ABC Report alone."

¶2. (SBU) Poloff responded that the Special Envoy's openness required little elaboration. The United States is deeply aware of its role in crafting the Abyei Protocol and remains committed to resolving Abyei just as it remains committed to the CPA's implementation. Pressed on whether the U.S. commitment extends to the implementation of the ABC Report's findings, PolOff countered that reports presented at the Assessment and Evaluation Commission and elsewhere suggest that the SPLM walked away from an April 2007 agreement reached at the SPLM/NCP Executive Committee talks that divorced the question of Abyei's geographical boundaries from its oil wealth.

¶3. (SBU) Deng denied that the NCP/SPLM talks had ever reached agreement on Abyei-specific wealth sharing. He asserted that the SPLM is open to an extraordinary agreement, but the NCP broke off talks without explanation and has not entertained SPLM requests since to restart them. While oil is "a factor" with respect to Abyei, he said the preeminent concern is establishing the region's borders and safeguarding its right to participate in the 2011 referendum. PolOff noted that the USG non-paper included language about the Interim Administration, and that that was the first of many steps towards pressing President Bashir to abide by his CPA obligations. Deng accepted this, but continued "I used to be one of those that argued we should give the NCP space (on Abyei), but I have abandoned that position. Does Washington stand with me?"

¶4. (SBU) COMMENT: Deng admitted that he had not yet seen the non-paper, but that he and Yasir Arman would be present with GOSS President Kiir when the Foreign Minister Deng Alor briefed Kiir on the Special Envoy's Khartoum meetings, the Abyei discussions in particular. Deng was clearly probing for the depth of Washington's support for the GOSS in resolving Abyei, especially given the contrasting styles of the past and present Special Envoys.

FERNANDEZ